

BOOK REVIEWS

IN CHARGE OF

M. E. CAMERON



THE LOVE-LETTERS OF DOROTHY OSBORNE. Edited by Edward Abbott Parry.

The reappearance, seventeen years after an earlier edition, of "The Love-Letters of Dorothy Osborne" may indicate that some of us have grown tired of fictitious "letters" of the kind that have been pressed upon us of late years, and that there has been a demand for more of the real thing. Certainly we may congratulate the publisher upon this timely reproduction of a charming book unknown to many readers of the present day and most welcome of old friends to those who have already made its acquaintance. Dorothy Osborne, as the title to her portrait informs us, was the daughter of Sir Peter Osborne and the wife of Sir William Temple. The letters are addressed to the last-named gentleman and extend over two years—from 1652 to 1654. The editor in his introduction gives us a brief sketch of the times, calling to our minds the greatness of the history of those days, and much of the interest of the book is owing to the memories it brings of the days of the Long Parliament, of sacrifice and suffering endured by the loyal adherents of the Royalist party; days too of pleasanter things, when Izaak Walton wrote his "Compleat Angler"—days of Waller, Cowley, Jeremy Taylor, and John Milton. By the mere mention of these names does the editor create a sort of golden light by which we read Dorothy's love-letters brimful of interest and sympathy, from the first formal missive beginning "Sir:" and ending "Yr. humble servant," to the last letter in the book, which, indeed, is no love-letter at all, but addressed to her nephew in 1659, and which comes in the appendix.

We leave the book in full agreement with the editor, who bids us find "mirrored darkly in these letters a beauty not of face or form, but what men call the Soul, that made Dorothy to Temple in fact, as she was in name, *the gift of God.*" To go back a little, what do we find in these letters? The story of a loyal woman cheerfully living alone with her feeble old father, sitting up at nights with him to see that his attendants cared for him faithfully; parrying the interference of her brother and other meddling friends who would have her settle in life to their satisfaction and wholly averse to her own; fighting horrors of "spleen" and "ague" with infusion of steel and the dirty waters of Epsom wells; taking her recreation of a fine evening—"walking out into a common that lies hard by the house, where many young wenches keep cows and sheep, and sit in the shade and sing ballads," of whom she says, "I talk to them, and find that they want nothing to make them the happiest people in the world but the knowledge that they are so." Or she sits in the garden "by the side of a small river that runs by," thinking until she loses herself in her thoughts, which are all of Temple and of ways of overcoming the "crossness of our fortunes."

A most gentle and lovable young woman, and highly appreciated was her character by all the marriageable young men of her circle. Such a list of suitors

for her hand! It includes Henry Cromwell, son of the Lord Protector, who makes favor for his suit in a gift of a pair of Irish greyhounds—big dogs were, by the way, Dorothy's favorites. She says, "A 'masty' (mastiff) is handsomer to me than the most exact little dog that ever lady played withal." One can't help wishing that the letters included some from Temple. We all know how much the letter received inspires the answer, and it would be a satisfaction to know which side originated the inspiration in this series.

"WEE MACGREGOR" AND "ETHEL" T. T. Bell. Harper & Brothers.

The story of "Wee Macgregor" has been proved a great favorite for holiday reading; and for those who have "the gift of tongues" to interpret the dialect no more innocent entertainment could be planned than following the young hero with his devoted coterie of relatives—"Paw," "Maw," and the elders—as they pursue their way to the shops, the Zoo, Rothesay shore, or the "surces" and "conversonies"—in fact, wherever Macgregor leads. To the uninitiated the dialect is very perplexing, and the author's kind thought for his readers in giving a glossary with the book is most necessary as well as complementary, for without its assistance how should we know our way through some of the engaging advice of Lizzie to her young son?

By the aid of the glossary we learn that the "bass," which really sounds like carved ceilings, is in our ordinary parlance the door-mat. The "gab" a bright person might rightly guess to be the mouth, but who is bright enough to answer when we call "carvies," "chenchjean," or "gundy"? No, no, we could make but a poor fist with the book, wanting that glossary, but even it fails in some dark places. It was with some pains that I found one who enlightened me as to the meaning of "*making a shed*" the last touch of preparation for Aunt Purdie's tea-party. To those who share my mystification 'tis confided that his mother parted the lad's hair.

The later book by the same author—"Ethel"—advertises itself to be perfectly free from dialect. It appears, however, that there may be two opinions as to the truth of this reassuring statement. What does Mr. Chubb mean by saying that he hasn't "a bite to the sole of his back"? or Mr. Hugh that he has been way-laid" into buying tickets? At least it is a curious way of using English. Miss Ethel is so charming that she may say what she likes. Her tenpence ha'penny ties may look "two shillingy," she may insist that she knows a breed of domestic fowls by the name of Corkings, and when she commands us to pass over the wee growl we too, like Mr. Hugh, would instantly place in her hand the trowel.

